

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USMISSION USUN
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4815

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, US
SUBJECT: BEGIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON: BEGIN'S APPROACH TO
NEGOTIATIONS

BEGIN SUMMARY: BEGIN'S PUBLICLY STATED APPROACH TO
NEGOTIATIONS DIFFERS FROM THAT OF PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS
IN THAT E EMPHASIZES DIRECT FACE-TO-FACE NEGOTIATIONS
BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE ARAB STATES FOR AN OVERALL
SETTLEMENT, MINIMAL MEDIATION BY THIRD PARTIES INCLUDING
THE U.S., AND NO FURTHER INTERIM AGREEMENTS. HE
ADVOCATES AN EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE
(HE HAS SAID ISRAEL WOULD BE READY IN OCTOBER), AND
HAS DECLARED ISRAEL'S READINESS TO ACCEPT A U.S./ SOVIET
INVITATION ON THE BASIS OF UNSC RESOLUTIONS 242/338.
BEGIN'S APPROACH ALSO SEEMS TO POSIT (A) THAT THE
U.S. FIRST SHOULD DETERMINE WHAT THE ARABS MEAN
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BY PEACE AND WHETHER THEY INDEED ARE READY TO
ENTER INTO PEACE AGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL BEFORE
PRESSING ISRAEL FOR TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS,
(B) THAT ISRAEL SHOULD NOT PREMATURELY REVEAL ITS
NEGOTIATING CARDS--I.E., THE TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS
WHICH IT MIGHT BE PREPARED TO MAKE FOR PEACE--
BEFORE KNOWING WHAT THE ARAB QUID-PRO-QUO WILL BE,

AND (C) THAT THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE SHOULD BE TREATED AS A REFUGEE PROBLEM REQUIRING A HUMANITARIAN ANSWER RATHER THAN AS A POLITICAL ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED THROUGH EITHER A HOMELAND OR STATEHOOD SOLUTION. DAYAN HAS SUGGESTED THAT AGREEMENTS WITH SYRIA RE THE GOLAN HEIGHTS AND EGYPT RE THE SINAI FOR SOMETHING LESS THAN FINAL PEACE MIGHT BE WORTH EXPLORING, IN PART TO DEFER ANY DECISIONS OR NEGOTIATIONS RE THE WEST BANK AND THE PALESTINIANS. IT IS NOT CLEAR, HOWEVER, WHETHER BEGIN WILL INSIST ON NEGOTIATIONS ONLY FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT OR WILL CONSIDER, EITHER DURING HIS UMCOMING WASHINGTON TRIP OR AT A LATER STAGE, AN ALTERNATE OPTION OF THIS NATURE. CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN BEGIN AND YADIN, AND POSSIBLE DMC PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION, WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT BEGIN'S APPROACH IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY

1. AS WITH OUR OTHER MESSAGES IN THIS SERIES, THIS CABLE IS NOT AN ATTEMPT TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME OF THE CARTER/BEGIN MEETING BUT RATHER TO ANALYZE WHAT WE BELIEVE WILL BE BEGIN'S GENERAL APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS. THE LIKUD PLATFORM ISSUED IN MARCH SAID THAT A LIKUD-LED GOVERNMENT WOULD BE COMMITTED TO NEGOTIATIONS
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FOR PEACE (SEE TEL AVIV A-124). GENUINE PEACE WOULD BE THE GOVERNMENT'S CENTRAL OBJECTIVE, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SPARE NO EFFORT TO PROMOTE PEACE, AND IT WOULD ACT AS A GENUINE PARTNER DURING PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. THE PLATFORM STATED EXPLICITLY THAT "THE LIKUD GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE." IT ALSO SAID THAT ISRAEL WOULD INVITE ITS NEIGHBORS TO HOLD DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS FROM EITHER SIDE AND WITHOUT ANY SOLUTION OR FORMULA INVENTED BY OUTSIDERS. AT THESE NEGOTIATIONS, EACH PARTY WOULD BE FREE TO MAKE ANY PROPOSALS IT SEES FIT. THESE NEGOTIATIONS COULD TAKE PLACE IN CAPITALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST OR AT GENEVA. WHEN PEACE TREATIES ARE SIGNED, BORDERS COULD BE OUTLINED AND NORMAL RELATIONSHIPS ESTABLISHED.

2. SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE, BEGIN HAS SAID BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THAT THE AVOIDANCE OF WAR AND THE SEARCH FOR PEACE ARE THE MAJOR TASKS OF HIS GOVERNMENT. ADDRESSING THE ZIONIST EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON JUNE 23, HE SAID THAT ISRAEL

WOULD NEGOTIATE FREELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242, AND FURTHER OBSERVED THAT "THE PARTIES THEMSELVES WILL DETERMINE THE SECURE AND RECOGNIZED BORDERS BY NEGOTIATING AMONG THEMSELVES WITHOUT PRIOR CONDITIONS, WITH NO ULTIMATIVE DEMANDS NOR FORMULAS FOR SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED BY OUTSIDE PARTIES. EVERYTHING IS OPEN TO NEGOTIATIONS, PROVIDED THESE ARE CONDUCTED FREELY BETWEEN THE PARTIES WHO ARE IN TURN FREE TO RAISE ANY PROPOSAL."

3. THESE STATEMENTS WELL ILLUSTRATE BEGIN'S APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS. HE WELCOMES THE PROSPECT OF ANY EARLY RESUMPTION OF THE GENEVA CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFERENCE, AT WHICH ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS SHOULD TRY TO NEGOTIATE AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT. IN BEGIN'S VIEW, THE ROLE OF THE U.S. IN THIS NEGOTIATING PROCESS SHOULD BE RELATIVELY LIMITED, PROBABLY CONFINED TO BRINGING THE PARTIES TOGETHER BUT NOT ACTIVELY MEDIATING BETWEEN THEM. BEGIN'S APPROACH IS SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT FROM

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 4815

EXDIS

THAT OF PRECEDING ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS, WHICH HAD
ACCEPTED A MORE ACTIVE U.S. ROLE AS WELL AS
INDIRECT AND STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS.

4. BEGIN'S APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS CAN USEFULLY
BE EXAMINED FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE THREE
CENTRAL ELEMENTS IDENTIFIED BY THE PRESIDENT:
THE NATURE OF PEACE, BORDER ADJUSTMENTS AND THE
PALESTINIAN QUESTION. ON THE FIRST , BEGIN SEEMS
TO WANT THE U.S. IN ITS ROLE AS MIDDLE MAN TO
DETERMINE WHAT THE ARABS UNDERSTAND BY PEACE,
AND WHETHER THEY INDEED ARE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE
REAL, OVERALL PEACE AGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL. UNLESS
AND UNTIL THE U.S. HAS OBTAINED CLEAR ANSWERS
FROM THE ARABS TO THESE QUESTIONS, HE BELIEVES
THAT WE SHOULD NOT DEMAND THAT ISRAEL SPECIFY
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WHAT KIND OF TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS IT IS
PREPARED TO MAKE. AS FAR AS WE CAN JUDGE, HE
WILL TRY TO AVOID INDICATING TO WHAT LINES ISRAEL
MIGHT BE PREPARED TO WITHDRAW BEFORE THE ARABS
HAVE INDICATED WHAT POLITICAL PRICE THEY ARE
PREPARED TO PAY. HE MIGHT POSSIBLY GO FURTHER
IN HIS PRIVATE MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT, BUT
AS YET WE HAVE NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT
THIS HOPE.

5. BEGIN'S APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL ISSUES REFLECTS
THE BASIC DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THE PERCEIVED NEED TO
SHOW FLEXIBILITY AND THE NEED TO PROTECT ISRAEL'S
VITAL SECURITY INTERESTS, AS HE UNDERSTANDS
THEM. AS REGARDS THE SINAI AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS,
HE HAS IMPLIED READINESS FOR CONCESSIONS, AND HIS
POSITION RE THESE TWO FRONTS WILL BE DETERMINED
PRIMARILY BY SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS. WHATEVER
THE FORMAT OR LOCATION OF NEGOTIATIONS, WE BELIEVE
BEGIN WILL CONTINUE TO RESIST PROPOSALS CALLING
FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WEST BANK. HIS
IDEOLOGICAL/HISTORICAL COMMITMENT TO RETENTION
OF THE WEST BANK DISTINGUISHES HIS APPROACH FROM
THAT OF RABIN AND MEIR, WHO HAD FOCUSED ON
SECURITY CONCERNS ALONE. IN ANY CASE, BEGIN WILL

TRY NOT TO REVEAL HIS "CARDS"--I.E., THE WITHDRAWALS
HE IS PREPARED TO OFFER FOR PEACE--TOO EARLY,
SEEKING TO HAVE US DRAW THE ARABS OUT ON PEACE
BEFORE INDICATING WHAT HIS TRUMP IS.

6. BEGIN IS ADAMANTLY OPPOSED TO A SOLUTION OF
THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM BASED ON EITHER A HOMELAND
OR STATEHOOD CONCEPT. AT THE SAME TIME, HE AND
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DAYAN HAVE INDICATED THAT THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN
REFUGEES IS A KEY ISSUE IN ANY NEGOTIATIONS. WE
BELIEVE THAT BEGIN IS LIKELY TO REFER TO UNSC
242--THE ONLY INTERNATIONALLY AGREED BASIS FOR
NEGOTIATIONS--TO BUTTRESS HIS ARGUMENT THAT THE
PALESTINIAN PROBLEM MUST BE DEALT WITH ONLY AS
A REFUGEE MATTER REQUIRING A HUMANITARIAN
SOLUTION. ON THE QUESTION OF PLO PARTICIPATION
IN GENEVE, BEGIN WILL STICK TO THE POSITION OF
PREVIOUS ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS. WE BELIEVE THAT
HE WILL BE STRONGLY DISINCLINED TO CONSIDER
COSMETIC FORMULAS WHICH WOULD BE SEEN AS BRINGING
THE PLO AS SUCH INTO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE
"THROUGH THE BACK DOOR." HOWEVER, HE WOULD
PROBABLY ACCEPT INCLUSION OF PLO MEMBERS IN A
JORDANIAN DELEGATION.

7. THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THE SCENARIOS OUTLINED BY BEGIN AND DAYAN FOR THE
NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. BEGIN HAS SAID THAT
HE WANTS TO GO TO BENEGAT TO NEGOTIATE OVERALL AND
FINAL PEACE SETTLEMENTS. DAYAN SAYS HE TOO THINKS
IT IS WORTH TRYING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT,
ALTHOUGH HE OBVIOUSLY SEES NO REAL CHANCE ONE
CAN BE ATTAINED AT PRESENT. HE PUTS MORE HOPE
INSTEAD IN A PHASED SEPARATE, "FINAL" AGREEMENTS
WITH EGYPT AND SYRIA, FOR SOMETHING LESS THAN
FULL PEACE. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER OR TO
WHAT EXTENT DAIFE THINKING OR ONLY REPEATING VARIATIONS OF
HIS OWN PAST STATEMENTS. BEGIN'S OPENING
POSITION, WE BELIEVE, WILL BE TO RESTATE HIS
READINESS TO GO TO GENEVA FOR UNCONDITIONAL,
OPEN-ENDED AND DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS FOR FINAL
PEACE. WE CANNOT PREDICT WHAT HIS BOTTOM LINE
POSITION WILL BE.

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8. THE EFFECT OF CURRENT COALITION POLITICS ON BEGIN'S APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS IS LIKELY TO BE MINIMAL. BEGIN'S RELUCTANCE TO ENDORSE UNSC RESOLUTION 242 OR STIPULATE READINESS FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE WAS AMONG THE PRINCIPAL ISSUES WHICH LED TO THE INITIAL BREAKDOWN OF LIKUD/DMC NEGOTIATIONS. YADIN WAS PROBABLY CHAGRINED TO FIND REFERENCE TO RESOLUTIONS 242/338 AND ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS GOI DECISIONS INCLUDED IN THE GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AT THE LAST MINUTES. (ONE DMC LEADER REMARKED THAT ALL OF THIS ONLY PROVED THAT BEGIN DID NOT REALLY WANT THE DMC IN.) NONETHELESS, NEGOTIATIONS HAVE NOW RESUMED AND THE DMC, UNDER STRONG PRESSURE FROM MANY DIRECTIONS, MAY JOIN THE COALITION. ITS ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT PROBABLY WOULD BE INTERPRETED ABROAD AS PRESAGING MORE FLEXIBILITY IN ISRAEL'S NEGOTIATING APPROACH. WE DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT THE DMC WILL BE ABLE TO AFFECT BEGIN'S FUNDAMENTAL APPROACH TO NEGOTIATIONS IN ANY SIGNIFICANT MANNER THAN REGARDS HIS MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT. LEWIS

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